

MAINE SOUND AND STORY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FIRST COAST

AN INTERVIEW WITH GAY CROWLEY FOR THE FIRST COAST JONESPORT/BEALS  
COLLECTION

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY GALEN KOCH

BEALS ISLAND, MAINE OCTOBER 28TH, 2018

TRANSCRIPT BY GRIFFIN POLLOCK

Interviewee Name: Gay Crowley

Project/Collection Title: The First Coast Jonesport and Beals

Interviewer(s) Name(s) and Affiliation: Galen Koch (The First Coast)

Interview Location: Moosabec Bait, Beals Island, Washington County, ME

Date of Interview: 10-28-2018

Interview Description:

Gay Crowley, operator of a local bait shop on Beals Island, talks about the ins-and-outs of bait selling. Crowley discusses the process of packaging worms, how she got started in the business, and the problems affecting the worm industry in Maine. Crowley also talks about her local island community, including what she values about it, and what fears she has for the future.

Keywords: Bait Worms, Beals Island, Fishing, Worming, Sport Fishing

Collection Description: Audio interviews from The First Coast's residency in Jonesport and Beals Island, October 2018.

Citation: Crowley, Gay, The First Coast 2018 Oral History Interview, October 28, 2018, by Galen Koch, 21 pages, Maine Sound and Story. Online: Insert URL (Last Accessed: Insert Date).

Transcribed By: Griffin Pollock

GK: Galen Koch

GC: Gay Crowley

[0:42:46.4]

START OF CROWLEY\_GAY\_JONESPORT\_AUDIO

[0:00:00.0]

GK: Just Audio, so nobody will even know. We could be in a mansion, nobody will ever know!

GC: We could!

GK: Well Gail (sic), just have you say your first and last name on this tape for me.

GC: Gay Crowley.

GK: And uh, can you tell me where--what part of Beal's we're on and where we are right now? What road are we on?

GC: On 5 Shore road, Beals' main.

GK: Did you--what uh, is this your house? You didn't grow up in this house did you?

GC: No I didn't, I grew up in the house right next door, actually.

GK: Oh really?

GC: Yes.

GK: Which one was that? This one?

GC: The blue one. That Frank Alley(?) is living in. My son bought it. (GK: Oh nice) From my parents, that was my parents' house.

GK: And Frank owns the take-out.

GC: Yes, he owns the take-out.

GK: When did that start?

GC: Um... Eleven years ago? He was also a worm digger, and got done digging to start another business, because he didn't see--didn't know if the future in the worm business would continue. It's been some rough, uh, bouts along the way. We've had a lot of times where we haven't had worms there, they've been depleted because of the flats, with the mussel draggers digging up the flats, that's done a big number on it. And over digging through the years. Uh, but it's--we've had one area that actually, this year, that came back, it hasn't been back for ten--ten years. And so that's got us through this year, and we're hoping that they'll come back next year and be

there as well. Because the demand is still there, but unfortunately they are coming out with some artificial bait. And so that of course is gonna, is always gonna be a threat in this business. But as long as they continue to have tournaments that they want them to use the real thing and not artificial, then it will, you know, persuade them to stay with the real thing.

[0:02:15.7]

GK: Will you--I just--you got your tea, do you wanna make some of that tea for yourself, it's boiling.

GC: I leave it on low. (both laughing)

GK: Oh you do? Okay, I just wanted to make sure it—

GC: No, I leave it on low, get a little steam in it.

GK: Oh that's nice, yeah.

GC: Did you want a cup?

GK: Oh...

GC: I have honey!

GK: Oh, maybe. Yeah, sure!

GC: Let me tell you, I have some tea!

GK: You have some tea! (Both laughing) Why do you have so much red rose?

GC: For the trinkets! I hope I'm not on this right now!

GK: I love that! I love that.

GC: Oh, we're not on right now, are we?

--Tape cuts out--

[0:02:52.6]

GK: So I was gonna ask you, um, if you could kinda walk me through--so you're saying, you know, there's fishermen who wanna use this bait, but can you walk me through like where it

goes and who's using it? 'Cause I think a lot of people don't know about where the worms are going.

GC: Well I usually send it, I send to Connecticut, I send to Boston, and New York. And they have little shops, bait shops, along the shore there where they buy a box or two, whatever it is, and when they get through ordering, they go according to what they have for orders, then they call me, tell me what they put their order in, and then I have according to what I have for diggers that goes that day, I send them what I have for all my markets to go dig whatever there is, you know, for what they need.

GK: Oh, so you'll get an order and then you'll send people out?

GC: They usually send out when the market starts, when everything starts opening up, when they're really buying a few worms, they usually start running, and it's Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. And I have two trucks that pick up for me, I have Boston truck that picks up Mondays and Thursdays and sometimes Saturdays. And then I have a New York truck that takes 'em Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. So we're pretty busy when things start.

GK: And when is that? When does it start?

[0:04:25.0]

GC: Well we usually start the first Thursday of the year usually right at the end of March, and then it usually doesn't start picking up so that they can dig whatever they can dig--all they can dig, until... Possibly the end of June, uh the third week in June things start really, and whether they order more after the kids get out of school and people start rolling in, you know, vacationers.

GK: And they're going--Is that because, like, people are starting to go fishing more?

GC: Right, when kids get out of school, and they mainly fish for pogies, and I guess they eat 'em, I really don't know alot what they fish for. Bass fishing? When they're good size worms. There's all kinds of different bait for different kinds of fishing.

GK: Yeah, yeah I mean and it's like, but it's kind of remarkable that there's that much--I mean it's mostly recreational fishing, right?

GC: Mainly, yes. It's for sports fishermen. (GK: Sports fishermen) Right, they'll take these boats out and pontoon boats and they'll go out, party boats, and they'll go out and party I'm sure, and fish! (Both laugh)

GK: And so this is--you're doing sand worms?

[0:05:43.6]

GC: Mainly, I do buy--pick up a few blood--when the diggers, my sandworm diggers dig, they pick up a few blood worms on the side and I buy those. I don't buy too many of those.

GK: What would those--would those be sold to the same places?

GC: Same places, there's only a couple that buy 'em, usually a couple markets. But I can--I don't have big volume in here to worry about getting rid of.

GK: Where are most of your diggers going?

GC: Uh, actually this year they've been going in Addison. That's the area I was tellin' you about that's been ten years that they haven't dug it, and it's come back. In years past it was anywhere from Harrington River to up towards Ellsworth way. Corea and places like that.

GK: So it's not just, uh, local--I mean, it's semi-local.

GC: No, in the years past, ten years ago, at one point they was going as far as Trenton, and digging double tides there. A lot of traveling back and forth. But uh, a good digger can make anywhere from 40 to 50 thousand a year for the season. (GK: Wow) I have had actually one digger who dug who said he made almost 50 thousand this season.

GK: And did he work a lot? Ha.

[0:07:11.3]

GC: Yes, he worked a lot. A lot of double tides, a lot of double tides, a lot of crating when I didn't have digging. Or I had a limit, and they dug extra and put 'em in the crate. But, um if you had to put your time in it, and you just can't take a day off, if you want to make that kind of money for the season.

GK: Yeah, that's pretty amazing.

GC: 'Cause it's only probably from one day at the end of March 'till... Well I think I got done this year, it was on the--it was the end of Septem--no the first part of October, around the 9th of October I got done, so that wasn't bad for that time-frame.

GK: Yeah, I mean that's basically half a year, yeah. And so, I'm just curious how this evolved for you and how you got started?

[0:08:10.6]

GC: How I got started was actually, was my oldest brother, William Harden, he decided that he wanted to open a bait shop. Because there was another bait shop that was on the island years ago before that, so he got into it, and it didn't work out quite as well for him, so my father and him worked together at it, and then my father took it over and took the business over. And he made it a business for 20 odd years, and he ended up getting sick, my father did, with cancer, and so I started stepping in about 6 years before he passed away, and pretty much was running things for him, and I've been running it ever since. And when he passed away I took the business over to continue it. And it's something that I take pride in, you know? I really, I really do--when it's good, it's good and when it's bad it's bad. It's like with anything else I suppose. But you know, I uh... It's something I--he didn't think he taught me very well I guess. He didn't think I paid attention, but these little things that he's taught me is remarkable. About how to try to push more worms on 'em when they probably don't need 'em or want 'em, but I do it.

GK: He taught you how to be a salesman.

GC: Yes, I never even took business in school, but I've had no choice, but I've done it!

GK: That's amazing! That's very self-made.

[0:09:43.8]

GC: Well... between that and some of the--part of the paperwork my mother used to do. She used to do all of the paperwork and she taught me how to do all that part. No, I enjoyed the business, I do, I've done it quite a few years now. And the thing I like about it more than anything now is that I have my shop right next to my house. Makes it so much easier, for years we rented down to Albert Carver's, behind Albert's. And my husband had to lug water for six years, I think it was like six years he had to lug water every day, so we would have the access to the salt water. Now in our new shop we have it so it pumps it up. We have, um... a black hose that goes under the shore and we bring it up with a pump, and I have drain holes in my floor so that I can let the water out and it will drain back out. So it works perfect now. A lot less work.

GK: That's great. And that's your--are you using that to put in the buckets, or to clean, or what's it for?

GC: I have four big barrels, and when the tide is up, I let the water--and in the summer I have to let it run for a while because it gets warm. I let it run, fill the barrels up, and that way when they come in, they take the buckets--smaller buckets, and take the water out of the barrels, put 'em on the benches to help count 'em out. And they always have access to that salt water, and that's something that's always very good for the business. Because you need that water, and you need your reefer for your worms to be put in.

GK: And are your, uh, diggers, do they come in and do they--are they counting them themselves?

[0:11:32.9]

GC: Yes. They come in and they count out 125 per tray, actually technically old school, it's supposed to be 127 due to cut ones or whatever. But they count 125 and put it in a tray, 8 trays is a thousand worms, and that's how they do it. And as soon as they get 'em counted, they put 'em in my cooler, I'll leave 'em in my cooler for about an hour or so, and then bring 'em out and pack 'em. And then the trucks come and pick 'em up and they go on their way.

GK: And you pack them--so you're cooling them because they'll—

GC: We cool 'em because it hardens 'em up and it toughens 'em up, and it's so much better for 'em, especially when it's warm, because they should cool down. And there's such a difference in an hour because they're not soft anymore, they toughen 'em up and they're harder, and they just are a better worm when they've been cooled down and refrigerated, and of course they always have to be refrigerated because they're very sensitive to any warmth. They don't last when they get warmed up too much.

GK: They seem like they would be pretty finicky.

[0:12:50.4]

GC: They can be, and you know it's like, in any kind of fresh water, they do not like any fresh water, you put in a little bit of fresh water with 'em, and they get in some of these rivers where they get too much fresh water in the rivers, they don't last, the worms don't last, because there's too much fresh water in 'em. Especially in the Spring, that's when it's bad to dig in the rivers.

GK: And so you also, you work with Amanda who I interviewed to get the worm lead.

GC: Yes, I actually got her into this business through another bait dealer in Connecticut, so I guess things work out great for people when you want 'em to!

GK: Yeah, yeah. And it was interesting, I was so interested talking to her about that, about how I didn't realize you had to ship these worms in a specific type of seaweed!

GC: Yes, it can't be just the other kind because they just don't last, I don't know if it's the bubbles in the coarser weed, but this is softer and they last great in it.

GK: And so do you put them in there in something? Or do they just kinda sit in.

[0:13:59.1]

GC: We usually, this is how it works. We start out, we make our boxes, we do that upstairs in a building. Make our tops and our bottoms and we line 'em up with newspapers. And we--I ship--we send 'em down on a chute and we weed 'em up according to how many I have for orders, and after they've come in and counted, we usually have 'em weeded before they come in and count out, that way after they're gone in the cooler, we can bring 'em out and pack 'em. After they've been in the cooler, after we've weeded 'em, we've got 'em on the benches waiting, we leave the worms in the cooler, then we bring the worms out. I have two U-boat carts I put my worms on so it's so much easier. And I--we pull the cart out and we just pack the worms up and I tie 'em up, and we put 'em back in the cooler, and I put on packing slips, and the trucks come pick 'em up. So...

GK: That's just, I mean it's like... It's these little things, these industries that I, that you don't really even think about happening, but they're there.

GC: I know, it is amazing. That these little critters, these little worms, how all these years they've been meaningful to a lot of sports fishermen, that's for sure.

GK: And there's seasonal income for a lot of...

[0:15:27.0]

GC: Exactly. Especially, you know I provide jobs for about 15 diggers, so I mean it is a big help around here, big help.

GK: Do you know how many other buyers there are around?

GC: Around here, uh... There is Ed Hagen, Kevin Robinson in Harrington, uh there is also Chris Kittledge in Millbridge, and there's a few more up that way. I don't know the names of all of 'em, but they're scattered from here up to crossed.

GK: But it's not nearly—

GC: Up to Wiscasset actually.

GK: Oh okay, but it's not nearly as—

GC: No, it's not like lobster fishermen, the wharves and things, no.

GK: Yeah, yeah. Or even clams.

GC: Or clams, right. No, there's probably more buyers with clams than worm buyers. I don't know though, there's only a couple around here that buys clams, so it's probably about the same, or about the same.

GK: Do some of your diggers also dig for clams? Is that kind of—

[0:16:38.9]

GC: Yeah I've had diggers in the past that in the winters they--yeah I do right now even, have diggers that will go digging in the winter when the worming is over or the lobstering's over, they do the clams in the winter. And then when Spring comes and the worming opens up, they'll start digging the worms.

GK: And what's been, I mean has it changed in terms of where people are going and how much they're able to get? In the time that you've been doing this?

GC: Oh, I've seen, yeah, big differences in a lot of it. Like I said it's because the worms just were not there. They had been reduced a lot of over--over digging, or being dragged up, mussel beds. But no, this year has been a better year because they have found some worms that—

[Phone rings, and recording cuts out]

[0:17:32.7]

GK: Yeah so, this was one of the first years that you saw a lot, they were finding some in place they haven't found 'cause of dragging.

GC: Right, this has been a better year then--it's been a better year due to the fact that they've found worms in this area, so it has been a definitely better year than it has been in the past, but we've seen a lot of bad years.

GK: Yeah, did you have years when you thought maybe you weren't gonna be able to keep doing it?

GC: I've had two years where I've had bait dealers who owed me money and that's rough, but fortunately I got paid back by one of 'em anyway, the other one still owed me some, but oh well, I survived. I'll just never deal with 'em again.

GK: Oh, they owed you money! So you had the worms.

GC: Oh, I provided them the worms and then they didn't pay me. It was like 2,000 dollars. But it could've been worse, I've seen worse, I've heard of worse, so I just take it as a loss.

GK: Yeah, how do you know who you can trust?

[0:18:41.4]

GC: Well the ones I have mainly are all new--older markets that my father had 20 odd years ago. And some of the markets I have are all new markets that I--that I have had myself. And I've had no problem. But it is hard to know, but you have to kind of just talk with the truck drivers and they know that there are markets that you can trust and not too, sometimes. Word of mouth.

GK: Right, they would probably know a lot about what was happening beyond here.

GC: Right. Right.

GK: And you were saying something about the synthetic ones? What's that about?

GC: Well they make artificial worms. They've made artificial worms before, and they do have artificial bait. It's not the same as the real thing, and the real sports fishermen would rather have the real thing. But others don't care if it just means catching that fish.

GK: Yeah, but it's like you might be getting the bigger, the better fish with the--with your real sand worms.

GC: Yeah, probably! (Both laugh)

GK: I am curious how far your bait actually goes. I wish you could track it.

[0:20:08.9]

GC: I know, I wish--I do know that I think that some of 'em are sending to the Carolinas. Mainly the blood worms. And probably even some go to Virginia, I think they do, but I don't know on my end where they go. I send 'em to these areas and they send 'em wherever, I don't know where they go for sure, I really don't.

GK: I know, how would you know? Could you have a little tracking device--

GC: Exactly, see where those worms are going! (Both laugh)

GK: So you have 15 diggers, and do you have employees too, or is it mostly just you?

GC: I had one young guy who works for me, and this year due to my hands getting bad with arthritis coming in, I needed an extra worker. And so I hired another one this summer. But to help me with tying up, 'cause it's something--we tie up all the--two boxes together as a bundle, and we have a lot to tie, and sometimes it's really a lot. It's gotten to where we've sent out, a lot of times, a hundred thousand a week.

[0:21:18.0]

GK: A hundred thousand bundles!?

GC: A hundred thousand worms. A few times, not a lot, but a few times.

GK: Wow, that's crazy.

GC: Oh, yeah it is, like I've said we've had a better year. So yeah.

GK: Wow, that's like... That's like a factory operation! With one little--well I guess it's probably not as big as a factory, but it's--

GC: Well it's, it's, it can be quite a lot more work to it then a lot of people, you know, realize, unless they were doing it or are trying to do it. But no, it's--we keep busy. We keep busy.

GK: And does the price of the worms fluctuate based on the bait dealers, or—

[0:22:05.2]

GC: The price of the worm has been fluctuating because--it goes on both sides, it could be the diggers, or we on the other end, us dealers have put the price up ourselves. But it's--we're--I'm trying to keep the price down, because if we keep going too high with it, we're gonna lose--that's when they're gonna turn to the artificial. And if they start introducing artificial into these tournaments, that's gonna, it's gonna really hurt us, it really will.

GK: I wonder if that, if worms could be used for any other kind of bait other than just for fishing. Have people tried--I don't know what, but...

GC: I'm sure they could be used for something, but they probably wouldn't want to be used... They wouldn't want to pay the price for 'em, probably if it wasn't gonna be something that they really wanted to use 'em for, like the sports fishermen. You see what I'm saying? If they wanted--

GK: Yeah, it's a niche--it's like a little niche market.

GC: Yeah.

GK: Yeah, it's like--I guess I've never realized, you probably get more, more bang for your buck, so to speak, worming than you do clamming.

[0:23:31.9]

GC: Yeah, well one thing about the worming, the know the price is the same, when they go clamming, it's been up and down so much, there's a lot of diggers I've heard that don't like that. At least when my diggers come in everyday they know the price's gonna stay the same, they're not gonna go dig and say "what are we gonna get today?" So I'd rather know every day when I was gonna go digging that I was gonna have the same price.

GK: Are there worms that come to you that you have to throw back?

GC: I've had worms that are caught that I've had to take out 'cause I--I try to pick out all the cut worms into their tray, that's in their trays, that if there's any cut ones in their trays, because they can damage the rest of them. Cut worms, worms that've been cut by the tongs of the hose, the worm hose.

GK: How do they damage the rest of them?

GC: Well, they just uh, mainly just cutting. By cuttin' when they get necked or something, that's what they call cut worms. And if they puncture 'em, then they can go bad, and it can destroy the rest of the worms in the box.

GK: Got it.

[0:24:41.0]

GC: Or some, they're spawners, they're black worms, but they have this green mess that comes out of 'em, and they're real soft and they can through the rest of the worms and destroy 'em, so you have to be aware and watch when you're packing 'em, especially in the Spring of the year, that are light, translucent, they're a greenish color worm, actually like I said they're translucent, you can almost see right through 'em, they're real soft. And they have white milky stuff that comes out of 'em, and if that comes out, that can go right into the rest of the worms and destroy the whole box. So we have to be aware to pick all these things out. So yeah, we do lose.

GK: So you're picking those out and putting them back—

GC: And when I take 'em out I'll have a part tray with like 25, 30 worms in it, and as I take out worms, I'll replace 'em with good worms. So that way they're not losing their worms out of the box.

GK: Oh, got it. There's a whole system. So these--I'm impressed that the diggers are able to get worms without cutting all of them!

[0:25:49.3]

GC: I know! I couldn't do it myself, no I couldn't. But no, they've got their knacks, they each have their own way of digging, and some of 'em pluck 'em right out, just grabbin' 'em right up.

GK: Wow, and they don't like pinch you or anything? Do they have a--

GC: Oh they, they can bite! They have--they look like snakes when the fangs come out like! And they can latch on, they bite. But it's not like they'll take your finger off or nothing, they just like sting.

GK: I just don't wanna be bit by a worm! I just don't.

GC: No, I don't think anyone wants to be bit by anything. If they can help it! (Both laugh)

GK: I know. Were you ever, like as a kid--was this going on when you were a kid?

GC: No. No.

GK: Okay, so this was a little later in life that your father was doing this. How old were you when he started?

[0:26:43.9]

GC: I was actually... I think a junior in highschool, so I was up there in age. Actually I think I was a sophomore when my brother got into it, and either a junior or senior when my father was doing it. So I've been pretty much helping out as part of the business ever since.

GK: Did you go to school or did you stay here?

GC: I finished highschool and that was it. (GK: Yeah) I got right into the business.

GK: Were you at Jonesport?

GC: Jonesport-Beals, yes. Don't forget Beals! (Laughter)

GK: I wasn't sure if it was consolidated back then!

GC: Yes it was! (GK: It was? When—) '69!

GK: That's when it got consolidated?

GC: Mhm. Yeah. I graduated in '77.

GK: Wow. And it was--was it the same building that it's in now?

GC: It's the one that's torn down now.

GK: Oh, right, that--those rocks are there.

GC: Right, right. Mhm.

GK: You know, I'm gonna go maybe see about that, talk to someone about what they're doing with the bridge, but that seems like a pretty big deal.

[0:27:50.5]

GC: Uh yes, actually the bridge was being built the year that I was born. Uh, my mother and father had to walk across the--there was like a pathway to walk across at the time, and they walked over the bridge for, you know, my mother and father with me in tow as a baby! And had me in Jonesport, my mother did. And that was the year that--and now this year, at 60 years old, as that's my age, there you are, building a new one! (GK: Wow) 60 years later.

GK: 60 years later!

GC: So I'm gonna see it, hopefully see a second bridge in my lifetime.

GK: I know! Just a couple more years maybe...

GC: Ehh, it'll be nice when it is done, that's for sure.

GK: It makes getting back and forth kind of a pain.

GC: It does, and I didn't know if it was gonna affect me this year with my diggers, but it was no problem. It was no problem, you know, 'cause of the lights, that's the thing that works. Because they have the lights for--you know, so we can get back and forth easier.

GK: Did it have any effect on your trucks? Do you have big tractor trailer trucks come?

GC: No, no not that much. Just box trucks.

GK: Okay, got it. Yeah I guess you don't need to be shipping that many worms.

[0:29:07.7]

GC: No, I need more diggers than what I had for that many!

GK: I know, seriously! Yeah, I'm excited to--I'm hoping to--I haven't seen any pictures of what they're trying to do with the bridge, the new one. Have you?

GC: Me neither, no. No, I don't know for sure what they're gonna do, but it'll be nice when it's done, that's for sure.

GK: And then this, I'm also really curious about all the, the wharves right here, these are all privately owned, right, mostly, or family wharfs?

GC: Yes, they all are privately owned wharves.

GK: And are most of the houses around where you live year-rounders? Like not seasonals?

GC: Uh, yes. There's a couple that isn't, but it's--there's more now that are seasonal than their used to be 20 years ago, 'cause a lot of people have passed away or sold their homes. And everything changes, everything changes.

[0:30:07.0]

GK: I know, but I'm surprised being here, 'cause I'm from Stonington, and it's just not, there's just not as many boarded up houses, there's a lot more year round residents I think. I mean there's a lot in Stonington, but there's a lot of houses that are seasonal, you know?

GC: Yeah, yeah see that's almost like a Bar Harbor kind of...

GK: Yeah, it's getting more like that.

GC: I don't want that here. I mean, I love my little town, and I don't wanna see--I'm not saying anything bad against tourists, I know they want to see a piece of heaven, that's what I call this place. But I don't want that, I don't want Bar Harbor. I don't wanna have to worry about if I'm gonna jump to--if I have to go to the store, I've got to wait for an hour before I can get across the bridge because there's so many people!

GK: I know! I know, it's—

GC: I don't wanna be overrun with big boats coming in, and checking everything all out, and with Frank's Take-out, we've got enough it it, we do. (Chuckles)

GK: So yeah, that's probably one of the major, or only?

[0:31:17.5]

GC: It's the only restaurant, there's no restaurant but his takeout on the island. Right, and he's got a nice little takeout, so we have a--we see a lot of people coming and going that I don't wanna see Bar Harbor here.

GK: No, no. I know. They're trying--I mean Stonington's a funny town 'cause it's definitely half and half. (GC: Mhm) But I know, I mean... Do you have a lot of, are there a lot of Massachusetts plates that will come to Frank's Takeout?

GC: I've seen a lot of New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, a lot of... Everywhere! Texas, I've seen 'em from all walks. It's amazing. Lot of people out this summer, especially I've noticed this summer a lot of people was out and about.

GK: This summer was--I am in Portland a lot of the time too, and it was crazy.

GC: Crazy.

GK: It made me almost lose my mind! (Both laughing) It was crazy! I mean, it's a lot of money which is good, but it was crazy.

GC: See, that's what I don't wanna see, too crazy. I don't mind--I know that people like to enjoy other places, but I just don't want 'em to get too close to this place and decide they wanna stay! (Laughing) I'm afraid of us getting too overrun with out of staters, that's what bothers me, because we won't have our own little closeness we always had with our town if everyone else steps in.

GK: Well and it's--and it's--do you worry about what your own values are as a community in terms of work (GC: Mhm) you know?

[0:32:59.6]

GC: Well see, one thing that's kind of hurt is the fact that with the diggers a lot of these out of staters have gone in and bought property, and that property is right on the shore, and where a lot of these diggers have to go to walk in the past, there was no problem in the past, but with these new out of staters moving in, they say "no, no." They don't want--they don't even stop and realize that these guys are just out there trying to make a living. Even though we've got a few that just are not doing the right thing by maybe being noisy at night, those are the ones that I don't--that we don't want to be down there digging, but the ones that are honestly trying to be quiet and go make their living and not throw paper down, or anything like that, then you know, that's what hurt us. Is a lot of the tourists coming and staying and won't allow 'em to be on the shore to make their living.

GK: Is there a... Do you have any of that intertidal zone stuff, you know where they technically they could dig there right, 'cause the property's owned up to the high water mark—

GC: Right, but their land is connected to that so far, so that puts them on--stops 'em! They can't go on their property, even though if they could get their through boat, with a boat, but not everyone has boats.

GK: They have no access from the--yeah.

[0:34:25.9]

GC: Right, if it's on their land, and even though they can dig as far as high water to low water or whatever, you can't get cross on their land to get to that. So that's what has hurt a lot of diggers in the past from digging areas. Especially up around Bar Harbor, when they went to Bar Harbor back ten years or so ago people stopped 'em from digging up there. On their property, up by their property. They wouldn't allow 'em to walk to the shore.

GK: I know, it's a huge issue, access. And it seems like, well at least in Jonesport and Beals, there's still a lot of access. But there's not a lot of--not necessarily for worms, but—

GC: Right, right.

GK: Do you think that's true, that there is access here, is that right?

GC: There is access, there is a lot more access right here, but even though down the island there's a few out of staters down there that's the same way.

GK: Yeah, yeah.

GC: But, you know, if they had boats they would have no problem, but not everyone has boats. So they can do that.

GK: Are the diggers talking to anybody like, in the government about this?

GC: No, because there are a few that lets 'em go in the area, so they go across on their land and then cut across the other way.

[0:35:46.2]

GK: Cheating the system a little bit, that's good! (GC laughs) No, I know it's a real issue, and it's an issue for laws, an issue for the worms--when I was with Amanda she was at a place in Trescott that was like some summer person who just allows her to go to this one place, luckily.

[Tape cuts out and resumes immediately]

GK: Well I wanted to say, I did wanna ask--yeah, how does it feel to be the town where the kids stick around, and there's so many--I mean really, like, I'm down at the variety store and there's like, I'm sitting next to someone and then someone walks in and they're like "That's my son and that's his son." You know? There's so many generations here.

[0:36:38.0]

GC: Well, I guess it's because we... we love it here, that's the only thing I can think of! It's peaceful, quiet, nice little community, I mean probably we're a very nosy bunch, but when it comes to being there for each other, we're always there. Matter of fact, we just had a young man in Jonesport that just drowned recently, Scott Chandler, and the community has helped Erma out greatly, and that's what we do. When we have problems and people are down and out and have serious problems, we always stick together and help each other out. And that's something that's a bond in between the communities that nobody takes away. And I think that's--I moved away for about a year and lived in Augusta, and believe me, after a while you realize when you move outta town, people don't know each other, they don't pay attention, they don't care like they do in this little small town. I'm glad to live here, I'm proud to live here. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. (GK: Yeah) I call it God's Country. (GK: It is!) That's what I tell other people that come by. I'll say "shh, don't tell anyone, this is God's Country."

GK: I know, well I've been struggling with being here and doing, you know, just the little stories and photos and stuff that I do take, and some of it's a lot like, on social media, you know, posts on the thing like "Oh, Jonesport!" And then I'm like, "Oh God, I don't wanna tell people about this!" I don't want it to get around, I don't know! Maybe I'll just post "just so everyone knows, it's off limits! They don't want anybody to come here!" (Both laughing)

[0:38:28.4]

GC: No, we're not that bad, we welcome 'em, just long as they don't take over. (Laughing)

GK: I know, I have felt very welcomed here, it's amazing. It's amazing. Well could--I mean, I went in there with Gina the other day, in your little shop.

GC: Did you get in there? I didn't know if you could, 'cause my boy's in there with his lobster gear now.

GK: Oh yeah, he was in there, we just looked around. But yeah, is there anything else about worming specifically that's on--that's like a concern or something that I didn't ask you about that you think I should know about?

[0:39:07.4]

GC: Well, it's mainly just, I wish that they could stop dragging in mussel beds up high. And let them have a chance to grow like they should grow so that we can put worms back, they'll come back and keep jobs going for us.

GK: Are those mussel draggers around Jonesport and Beals too? Do you know?

GC: I think so, I think they're around any shoreline. And I don't even know the times when they do the mussel dragging, but it does hurt.

GK: What about the uh--do you have any run-ins with the—

GC: Green crabs! Green crabs is something that is helping to destroy the worms. They're all over the flats, sand worms and blood worms and clams. And they're invasive species, and I wish we could get rid of 'em somehow or another.

GK: I know. (electrical feedback is heard) Why is this giving me feedback... There's some weird little noise... Oh I think it's from your phone! I wasn't paying attention, it was like "zzt, zzt."

GC: Oh, I'll move it. Is it all right now?

[0:40:27.9]

GK: Yeah, it's so weird, radio waves. Um, yeah the green crabs are a really serious thing. Have you, has anyone talked about, did any of your diggers talk about ways that they might be trying to get rid of them? Are they doing traps or anything?

GC: No, there are some people that have tried to trap them and sell 'em, but the market for 'em is only a certain time of year for the green crabs, which is right now in New York, they uh, they use green crabs for fishing. But other than that there wasn't enough price for 'em. They wasn't gonna pay enough for 'em for anyone to really do it. There are a few boats that do just fish for crab fishing. You know, for the crab fish. But there's not many around here, I don't think there's anyone around this area.

GK: No, I don't think so either. So it's like dragging, green crabs, and access to the water. The dragging, I can't believe they're still dragging for mussels to tell you the truth.

[0:41:36.5]

GC: Well they shouldn't, because there's enough mussel beds down below rather than high water, up higher water, that they could do that.

GK: Yeah, and they're doing mussel aquaculture which seems to be working pretty well on the rafts and ropes and stuff, you know?

GC: No, I haven't seen that, but there's probably—

GK: They grow it down in, like Southern Maine, they're doing a lot of that and it seems to be working pretty well and doesn't interfere as much with--

GC: Yeah, that would be a lot better so they didn't have to drag and bother other areas with worming and the flats and such.

GK: I know, I wish there were someone worming now that I could go and follow around, I wanna see them, but it's not the right season!

GC: Come back in the Spring!

GK: I know, I will. I will come back in the Spring.

GC: Actually, Frank's back to worming, so you can tag along, watch him dig.

GK: Oh that would be so fun, that would be so fun. Yeah, that's great. Well I will let you get back to your life, but I had a really good time talking with you!

GC: Good.

[0:42:46.4]

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